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on them. Meat in excess of immediate needs is cut into narrow strips and dried on a rack over a fire. The strips are then covered with salt and stored away for future use. Fish are dried in the same way. Such preserved foods are eaten by the workers in the fields or help to furnish forth the repasts on a journey. In the hills, so far as I have observed, the Karen does not fry his food; but on the plains, where he has more or less taken up Burmese ways, cooking food in fat has become somewhat common. This is usually done outside the house, however, because the Karen, like the Burmese and Shan, have a superstitious fear of the smell of cooking.

While cooking is preeminently the women's work, it seems that nearly every man can cook and does on occasion prepare his own food. I have eaten many a tasty meal prepared by Karen men, who considerately took pains to have clean utensils and to use only such condiments as they knew white men were likely to relish.

The serving of food among the Karen is a simple matter. The rice is emptied into a tray, the meats or vegetables are put in little bowls, and all are set on a mat on the floor. The members of the household squat around this "family board" and eat with the hand. They pour gravy from the meat, fish, or other side-dishes on the rice, work it in with the fingers, and convey the food in compact lumps to their mouths. Among the more primitive large plantain leaves often serve as trays and plates. The Karen on the plains use separate dishes of china or enamel-ware, which are readily obtained in the bazaar. These are set on a low table, standing no more than six inches above the floor. This manner of serving is in vogue among the Burmese. There is not much sociability about a Karen meal. Each person attends to his eating until he has finished, when he rises, rinses off his hands, quenches his thirst with a drink of water, and withdraws to sit down, or leaves the house without formality. The members of a family generally eat together; but if guests are present, the women usually wait until the men are served. Large quantities of food are prepared for wedding and funeral-feasts, which, as a rule, the men and women partake of separately without particular order or arrangement.

The safety-match is nowadays the common means employed by Karens in producing fire; but formerly the flint and steel were used, as they were all over the world in the early days of the nineteenth century and before. A simpler, and probably indigenous, method was by the friction of two dry pieces of bamboo. One

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piece was sawn back and forth through a groove cut crosswise on the crest of another, the latter being a half-section of large bamboo laid over a quantity of shavings or punk. The heat thus generated in a minute or two produced smoke and a flame, and the tinder caught the blaze. A generation or two ago Karens carried fire pistons, when on a journey, to light their pipes. The description of this simple mechanism, which has been given to me, is that it was a bone or metal cylinder with a small hole at one end into which a tight-fitting piston was driven by a sharp blow and then quickly withdrawn. The air within was thus sufficiently compressed and heated to ignite a bit of tinder at the bottom of the cylinder.[3]

Milk does not form a part of the diet of the Karen people any more than it does of some other Oriental races. There is little with which to feed babies whose mothers can not nurse them. However, it is a comparatively rare thing for a mother not to be able to nurse her child. The first solid food given to babies is rice that has first been masticated by the mother. The kind of food eaten by the parents is given to their children as soon as they cry for it. This, I think, is one of the most fruitful sources of the high death rate among Karen infants.

The people in the hills eat three meals a day, one soon after rising, one at mid-day, and the third in the evening after the work is done. On the plains an early "chota hazri" of glutinous rice is sometimes, but not always, taken.[4] The regular morning meal comes somewhere between eight and ten o'clock and the afternoon repast between three and five. Tea is coming to be much used among the Karen, either the native pickled tea which is imported by the Burmese from the Shan states, or the Chinese and India teas which are now sold all over the country. The Karen drink their tea without milk and often put in a little salt in place of sugar. Coffee is used to some extent in the Karen hills and is drunk without milk, unless some one has brought home a can of condensed milk from town, this preparation being considered a most delicious sweetmeat.

Alcoholic beverages are brewed or distilled among the Karen. A kind of rice beer is made by allowing boiled rice to stand in jars of water and ferment. Old fermented rice is left in a jar, and fresh rice water is poured upon it. After standing several days, it ac-

[3] The fire piston is used by the Bans in Borneo. It is also found throughout the Malay Peninsula and in Sumatra: Hose and MacDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*.

[4] "Chota hazri" is the Hindustani word used throughout India for the little breakfast of toast and tea or coffee that Europeans take immediately on rising.